Rubric for Scoring
Distinguished Middle School Applications

The scoring rubric provides a comprehensive set of quality statements that reflect a consensus of the education community about the elements that should be present in an exemplary middle school. Individual schools may use the rubric for self-assessment. The rubric will be used to evaluate 1999 Distinguished Middle School applications based on a four-point scale (4 signifies high quality). Each rubric level is designed to be a holistic description, not a checklist. Evaluators will assign the score that *most closely resembles* the information provided in the application. Schools selected for recognition typically receive scores of 3 or 4. To receive scores of 3 and 4, schools must provide specific examples and other evidence in their responses. Applicants are not expected to receive scores of level 4 in all areas. In some instances level 4 describes an ideal toward which schools are encouraged to strive.

1 STANDARDS, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Vision, Standards, and Accountability Describe the process used by your school community for developing and communicating a common vision of what students should know, understand, and be able to do upon leaving middle school. Indicate the roles played by members of your school community. Describe how your school is developing and implementing rigorous content and performance standards. Describe how you ensure that local standards are at least as rigorous as state standards. Describe how the school and district examine school data to ensure progress toward schoolwide improvement and communicate results to the community.

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
Representatives of all segments of the school community—administrators, teachers, other school staff, families, and community members—collaborate to establish and communicate a clear vision of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do upon leaving middle school. The vision reflects current research and practice and the cultural diversity of the student population. The vision statement is periodically reviewed and adjusted.	School staff, the school site council, and selected parents collaborate to establish a clear vision of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do. The vision statement is communicated to the school community and is periodically reviewed and adjusted.	Administrators and some teachers determine what students should know and be able to do. The vision statement is generally consistent with the curriculum. This information is communicated to the school community. The vision statement is periodically reviewed by staff.	The school community has a formal statement of philosophy and goals that is kept on file at the school. It is rarely used in making curricular and staff development decisions and may not be consistent with the curriculum or reflected in day-to-day operations.
The school has high expectations for all students. Content and performance standards for English/language arts and mathematics are in place, and standards for additional subject areas are in development. The process used to develop standards in English/language arts and math is described, including how local standards have been examined, to ensure that they are at least as rigorous as state standards.	The school has high expectations for all students. Content and performance standards in at least English/language arts and math are in place or are in the final stages of development. The process used to develop standards in English/language arts and math is described, including how local standards have been or will be examined, to ensure that they are at least as rigorous as state standards.	The school has high expectations for all students. Work is underway to develop content and performance standards, with development of standards in English/language arts and math in the beginning stage. The process used to develop standards is described.	School administrators and teachers plan to develop content and performance standards.
A school improvement plan with yearly goals has been developed by all segments of the school community. The school uses a variety of methods to evaluate the effectiveness of its overall program. The plan focuses on how the school program will help all students achieve content and performance standards. School budget items are aligned with the improvement plan.	A school improvement plan with yearly goals has been developed by all segments of the school community. The plan focuses on how the school program will help all students achieve content and performance standards. Efforts are underway to make sure school budget items align more closely with the improvement plan.	The school staff develops an improvement plan each year to evaluate some aspects of its program. There may be yearly goals. School budget items are not necessarily aligned with the plan.	It is not clear whether a yearly improvement plan is in place. Administrators, staff, the school site council, or individual teachers may determine school budget items, but not as a cohesive group.
Results of the school evaluation process are communicated to all segments of the school community in a variety of ways that go beyond the School Accountability Report Card and student report cards (e.g., media, Web page, town hall meetings).	Results of the school evaluation process are communicated to families and other representatives of the school community in a variety of ways.	There is limited communication with families and the community regarding school evaluation results.	Strategies for reporting school evaluation results to families and the community are not discussed.

2 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—STANDARDS, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Student Assessment   Describe how the school and district examine school data to ensure progress toward schoolwide improvement. Describe your methods of student assessment, how your assessments are aligned with your standards, and how you measure whether all students are meeting your standards. Show how teachers use assessment information to modify curriculum and instruction to improve student achievement. Provide examples of assessment in English/language arts and mathematics. Describe how students are involved in the analysis of their own work. Describe how the progress of special needs students is assessed. Describe how student results are reported to students, families, and the community. *Assessment methods may include, but are not limited to, teacher evaluation of student work (grades, records, checklists, portfolios); district-developed assessments, writing samples, criterion-referenced assessments, and assessments linked to instructional materials; Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) results, alternative language assessments such as Aprende, and publishers' norm-referenced tests.*

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
Teachers regularly use a wide range of assessment information to modify curriculum and instruction and to improve student achievement of standards. An assessment system based on multiple measures is in place or is being developed. Examples of how the assessment process is used are provided in English/language arts and math.	Teachers use some student assessment information to plan for curriculum and instruction. An assessment system based on multiple measures is in place or is being developed. Examples of how the assessment is used are provided in English/language arts and math.	Teachers use student achievement information periodically to plan for curriculum and instruction, but there is no regular process. Development of an assessment system based on multiple measures is being developed.	Student assessment information may be examined, but the analysis does not relate to classroom practices. The school intends to develop an assessment system based on multiple measures.
All teachers meet regularly to analyze student work in all areas, determine what students know, and decide what their next teaching steps should be. Multiple strategies are in place to ensure that teachers apply consistent criteria in judging student work. As a team, all teachers and other members of the school community regularly examine student assessment data and school data. They analyze the data and make decisions about the entire school, each classroom, and individual students.	All teachers meet at least quarterly to analyze student work in some subject areas. They determine what students know and decide what their next teaching steps should be. Teachers apply consistent criteria in judging student work. Teachers and other members of the school community analyze data to make decisions about the entire school, each classroom, and individual students.	A few teachers meet at least once a year to analyze student work in some areas to determine what students know and decide what their next teaching steps should be. Little attention is given to ensure that teachers apply consistent criteria in judging student work. Teachers, as individuals rather than as a school team, examine test scores and other classroom data and make decisions about their classes and students.	Teachers rely heavily on teacher- or text-generated tests, nationally normed tests, and individual work sheets to evaluate students. Teachers and administrators may examine individual student test scores and other data to make decisions.
Students often analyze their own work, reflect on their progress, and identify their strengths and weaknesses.	Students sometimes analyze their own work, reflect on their progress, and identify their strengths and weaknesses.	Students rarely analyze their own work. They depend primarily on their teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses.	Students depend on their teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses rather than analyzing their own work.
All students with special needs are assessed appropriately to accurately depict their knowledge and growth.	Some students with special needs are assessed appropriately to accurately demonstrate their knowledge and growth.	There is limited evidence that special needs students are appropriately assessed.	Assessment of special needs students is not addressed.
There is a comprehensive process for communicating individual student results to families. Disaggregated assessment results are also communicated to the entire school community. Families of English language learners receive information in their primary language(s).	There is a process for communicating individual student results to families. Disaggregated results are also reported to some members of the school community. Efforts are made to communicate results to families in their primary language(s).	There is limited communication with families and the community regarding student assessment results.	Strategies for reporting student assessment results to families and the school community are not described.

3 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—TEACHING AND LEARNING: Curriculum Content and Instructional Practices   Describe how the school provides a comprehensive and balanced core curriculum in all subject areas that is articulated across grade levels. Use examples from English/language arts or math to describe how the curriculum is aligned with the school's content and performance standards. Describe how all students are provided with challenging learning experiences appropriate to young adolescents. Describe curriculum development and the selection of instructional materials in the school. Describe the library/media services that support the curriculum. **Note: This section will be weighted twofold in the application scoring process.**

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
A comprehensive core curriculum is provided to all students across all grade levels in all curriculum areas—English/language arts, math, science, history/social science, health education, visual and performing arts, physical education, and career awareness. The curriculum includes content knowledge, application of basic skills, problem solving, and comprehension. Research on current educational practices has been used in curriculum planning.	A comprehensive core curriculum in most subjects is provided to all students. It includes content knowledge, application of basic skills, problem solving, and comprehension within an interdisciplinary approach. Curriculum planning is based on current educational research and knowledge of best practices.	The application makes general statements that a comprehensive core curriculum is provided to all students in some areas. Curriculum planning is based on knowledge of best practices.	It is not clear that a comprehensive core curriculum is provided for all students. The curriculum for some students may be remedial in nature.
The curriculum is aligned with content and performance standards in core areas. It is articulated across grade levels, including articulation with high school and feeder elementary schools. Examples are provided in English/language arts or math to demonstrate the alignment with content and performance standards and articulation across grade levels.	The school is aligning its curriculum with content and performance standards. Articulation of the core curriculum across grade levels is implemented in some areas. Examples are provided in English/language arts or math to demonstrate the alignment and articulation across grade levels.	There is a plan to align the curriculum with content and performance standards when they are completed. School staff meets periodically for curriculum articulation across grade levels.	Discussion of standards is just beginning. Articulation of the curriculum across grade levels is not addressed.
Curriculum development and the selection of instructional materials involve the entire school community. The curriculum and materials are aligned with standards. The materials reflect current educational research and practice and are examined to determine their effectiveness.	School and district staffs develop curriculum and solicit community opinion. There is a plan to align instructional materials with standards. A process for reviewing alignment is clearly described and may be implemented in some areas. A process is being developed to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials.	Members of the school community are involved in the selection of textbooks and instructional materials at the district or site level. It is not clear whether the instructional materials have been examined for effectiveness.	District or school staff is involved in the selection of textbooks. Instructional materials may be purchased by individual teachers to enhance or extend their lessons. The effectiveness of the materials is not addressed.
The staff uses a variety of instructional methods and strategies to meet the needs of all students. These include flexible groupings, hands-on activities, projects, concrete materials, fieldwork, service-learning, and library research. All students have opportunities to create, perform, and respond to artistic stimuli. The methods and strategies address young adolescents' need to be active. Students are encouraged to go beyond the core curriculum and expand their independent learning abilities.	A variety of instructional methods are being used in most classrooms and curricular areas. Students work in groups and independently. Instructional groupings vary with the nature of the task. The methods and strategies address young adolescents' need to be active.	The staff relies on textbooks to provide rigor in the curriculum areas. Learning occurs in large-group and small-group instruction. Students may work in groups or independently. Individual students receive additional help on an as-needed basis. The school is working on strategies that will provide students a greater variety of learning experiences.	Most of the time learning takes place through whole-group instruction and traditional ability groups. There is no discussion of instructional practices appropriate to the developmental needs of middle grade students. Strategies appear to focus on teacher needs.
Learning activities are supported by a high-quality library/media center with full-time credentialed library/media staff, current technology, and learning resources to meet the diverse needs of students. The library/media center is available to students and families beyond the school day.	Learning activities are supported by a library/media center with full-time paid staff, current technology, and a variety of learning resources. The library is open during the normal school day.	Learning activities are supported by a library with part-time paid staff. Some technology and learning resources are available.	Learning activities are supported by a library kept open by volunteers.

4 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—TEACHING AND LEARNING: Teacher Professionalism Describe the processes that support teacher professionalism. Describe the professional development activities that are provided, particularly in English/language arts and mathematics, who participates, and how the activities are selected. Discuss support activities designed for new teachers. Describe the opportunities that are available for teachers to collaborate with other teachers, broaden their knowledge, provide mentoring and other leadership, and participate in decision making. *Discussion may include, but is not limited to, participation in Subject Matter Projects, collaborative networks, and professional organizations; Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program; Bilingual Teacher Training Program; internships; structured mentoring/coaching relationships; teacher release time and/or regular collaborative time; service-learning; maintenance of a professional library; etc.*

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
Professional development focuses on preparing teachers to help students achieve content and performance standards. It also aims to strengthen subject-matter expertise, classroom management skills, and learning support strategies. Training related to special needs students reflects the demographics of the school. There is a comprehensive plan for professional development, and its effectiveness is evaluated based on student assessment data.	Professional development focuses on preparing teachers to help students achieve content and performance standards. Professional development also includes strengthening subject-matter expertise, classroom management, and learning support strategies. Training related to special needs students reflects the demographics of the school.	Plans are being developed to have professional development focused on helping students achieve content and performance standards. Professional development may include strengthening subject-matter expertise, classroom management skills, and learning support strategies. Training related to special needs students is discussed, but it may not be clear whether it reflects the school's demographics.	The professional development program is determined by individual teachers based on their interests and classroom needs. Training related to special needs students, if discussed at all, is not connected to the school's demographics.
New teachers are carefully selected, supported, and monitored with a professional development plan and qualified support providers.	New teachers are carefully selected, supported, and monitored with a professional development plan.	Support for new teachers may be limited to a mentor teacher.	There is no evidence of support for new teachers.
Teachers are empowered to make decisions about curriculum, instruction, discipline, teacher and program evaluation, school operations, etc. Opportunities are routinely scheduled for teachers to work and plan collaboratively, share current educational research, and reflect on classroom practices. They have opportunities to articulate with elementary and high school staffs about the children they serve in order to facilitate positive transitions for students and families. Teachers are recognized for making exceptional efforts with students. Job satisfaction is high.	Teachers are empowered to make decisions about curriculum, instruction, discipline, teacher and program evaluation, school operations, etc. There are frequent opportunities for teachers to work and plan collaboratively and to share information. They may have some opportunities to articulate with elementary and high school staff about the children they serve in order to facilitate positive transitions for students and families.	Some teachers serve on committees in the school such as the school site council or the student study/student success team. Teachers and administrators are working on increasing teacher involvement in the operation of the school. There are some opportunities for teachers to work and plan collaboratively and to share information.	The principal makes most of the decisions about the school with suggestions from some teachers. Teachers have little opportunity to work and plan collaboratively and to share information.
Teachers are encouraged to expand their roles, grow professionally, and use best practices based on research. Other school staff members frequently provide staff development for their colleagues. All members of the school staff are viewed as an essential part of a team to enable students to succeed.	Teachers are encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities at the school, district, county, and regional levels. Opportunities are provided at staff meetings for teachers to share what they learned from their professional development. Other school staff members attend meetings and professional development activities, and there is recognition that everyone plays a part in student success.	Teachers participate in professional development opportunities at the district, county, or regional level, but support by the school is limited. Opportunities to share information are limited. Other school staff members are recognized as resources for student learning, but only relative to job title and function.	Teachers do not attend workshops and in-services consistently. The school or district does not provide fiscal support of professional development activities. School staff members other than teachers are not recognized for the part they play in student achievement.

5 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—TEACHING AND LEARNING: Integration of Technology Discuss the ongoing process of integrating technology into the total school program. Describe your plan for technology use. Discuss how professional development needs are met. Describe how students, teachers, library/media teachers, other support staff, and community and business partners are provided information and various learning resources. Include the accommodations that have been made to ensure appropriate technical assistance for staff and students. Include examples of usage data (e.g., the number of computers, frequency of usage, population of users, etc.). Desribe the extent of electronic networking infrastructure throughout the site and beyond. Explain funding, and describe how your school utilizes family and community resources and is involved in regional coordination to maximize effectiveness of technology integration.

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
Teaching, learning, and administration of school programs are accomplished with appropriate technology such as computers, telecommunications, and other media. Technology is used to help students increase their knowledge and skills, expand the depth and scope of curriculum, and obtain information outside the classroom. High-quality training for the effective use of technology in the teaching/learning process is provided on an ongoing basis.	Teaching, learning, and the administration of school programs are accomplished with appropriate technology. Technology is used to help students increase their knowledge and skills and to expand the depth and scope of the curriculum. Training for the effective use of technology in the teaching/learning process is provided.	Technology is used primarily as a tool to assist teachers in the management of the instructional program. The school is developing a program in which technology will be used to expand the curriculum. Some training for the use of technology is provided.	Technology is used primarily as a record-keeping and data collection tool for teachers. Student access to technology, if any, is limited to beginning computer literacy and/or drill and practice. Technology training is rarely offered.
All students and school personnel have convenient access to and use a wide array of information and learning resources in a variety of formats. Usage data reflect use of the Internet, on-line networks, databases, etc., by teachers, parents, students, and community members. Teachers and students use technology in a variety of learning activities.	All students and school personnel have access to a wide array of information and learning resources through technology. Teachers guide their students in the use of technological tools. Technology support may be limited to a technology or computer lab that is accessible to students during and after normal school hours. Staff proficient in technology is available.	Technology is available to students for specific purposes such as word processing or information retrieval. Technology is available for those who are most interested or most in need, but it is less accessible to general students.	Some access to electronic information and learning resources is available; however, learning and information resources are primarily print-based.
A well-structured organization of contacts for technical assistance provides timely help. An on-site lead person has been identified for immediate needs, and the staff has access to outside assistance as necessary.	Staff is available on site to provide technical assistance. Coordinated technology assistance may be provided at the district level.	Some technology assistance is provided.	No on-site technology assistance is formally available.
The impetus for change is a clear vision of the instructional, learning, and administrative advantages that can be provided through technology. Well-planned electronic networking at the site and beyond is in place or being implemented. Evaluation of effectiveness is built into the planning structure. There is a plan to update essential technology.	Planning and implementation of electronic networking at the site and beyond are underway. The advantages of using technology in instruction and administration are well understood.	A plan exists for networking within the site.	No technology plan exists within the school.
The funding of technology is used to enhance the quality of education provided for students. Technology is integral to all regular, categorical, and special programs. A broad range of opportunities to collaborate and share resources with outside sources have been utilized.	Use of technology is seen as appropriate to all regular, categorical, and special programs. Numerous opportunities to obtain funding from outside sources have been sought.	Opportunities to obtain funding from outside sources are being explored.	Funding for technology is extremely limited. Opportunities to obtain funding from outside sources have not been considered.

6 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—SUPPORT FOR STUDENT LEARNING: Middle School Culture   Describe the culture of the school. Give specific examples of how the school reflects the exemplary middle-level school described in *Caught in the Middle* (1987) and *Turning Points* (1989). Describe those aspects of the middle school philosophy that have been implemented to make the school a student-centered place where students do not "slip through the cracks." Describe how the school environment ensures learning for all students. Give specific examples of strategies that the school employs for nurturing students to enhance self-esteem, participation, and commitment. Describe the strategies used to ensure that students feel a sense of connection to the school.

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
The culture of the school reflects energy; enthusiasm; a commitment to excellence; and active, conscientious support of ways to achieve the school's vision. The curriculum, the instructional practices employed, and the organization of the school reflect the academic, social, and personal developmental characteristics of young adolescents.	The culture of the school reflects a commitment to excellence and active support of ways to achieve the school's vision. The curriculum, the instructional practices employed, and the organization of the school reflect some developmental characteristics of young adolescents.	The school shares a common sense of purpose; values effective past practices; and is exploring new methodologies that will more appropriately reflect the developmental characteristics of young adolescents.	It appears that the primary focus is on the staff's effectiveness in terms of class management, curriculum coverage, and student performance.
The school provides a caring and nurturing environment that actively promotes student learning. The climate in all classrooms is one of respect and concern for others. A hallmark of the school is collaboration by staff members to improve the quality of the program and the experiences of the students as they transition through the middle grades.	All staff members see themselves as helping to promote a caring and nurturing climate. There is a strong focus on respect and concern for others.	The administration and faculty are aware of the need to support students. Some detail is provided of ways in which personal attention is given to students.	There is no evidence that the school is focused on meeting the needs of the whole child.
The master schedule demonstrates flexibility to encourage the use of a variety of instructional methods and materials appropriate to the needs of young adolescents.	A variety of scheduling and instructional strategies are used that are appropriate to the needs of young adolescents.	Planning is underway to develop a master schedule and instructional strategies that will more effectively meet the needs of young adolescents.	The schedule closely resembles the traditional high school structure of several periods a day, with a different teacher for each course.
With few exceptions, students are served in regular classroom settings. Support is provided in the classroom, in after-school tutoring programs, and through student-to-student support groups and cooperative learning groups.	Most students are served in regular classrooms. Some support systems are in place, and others are being planned.	The school is making efforts to move to a core curriculum process with support systems.	Little or no information is provided about ways in which student support is personalized.
In addition to the core curriculum, students have opportunities to explore a variety of skills, areas of knowledge, and experiences through the exploratory curriculum and to enhance their skills and knowledge through the elective curriculum. All students participate in the exploratory and elective curricula.	The importance of exploratory and elective courses in middle-level school curriculum is discussed, and the courses are available to most students.	Exploratory and elective courses are limited and are available only to some groups of students.	There is no evidence that exploratory or elective courses are provided for students.
A successful system is in place to bond all students to the school and community through a variety of strategies, such as extracurricular, co-curricular, and intramural activities; student leadership activities; group membership; and service-learning. These activities are open to all students, and staff members encourage all students to become active participants. Evidence shows a high level of student participation.	A system is in place to bond all students to the school and community. There is some evidence that it is successful. All students are encouraged to participate in school activities. Programs and strategies show promise but may not be fully developed. Evidence shows that many students participate.	Bonding between staff, students, and parents varies and may be limited to only a few groups of students.	There is little or no evidence of a process that would bond all students to the school and community. Activities that involve relatively few students may be cited.

7 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—SUPPORT FOR STUDENT LEARNING: Academic Counseling Discuss how the school provides academic counseling for middle-level students. Describe the strategies used to ensure that students are prepared for a broad range of academic options in high school, including programs to support students from groups traditionally underrepresented in colleges and universities. Describe the processes in place to encourage all students to aspire to academic success. Describe the roles teachers play in providing academic counseling.

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
The school encourages all students to aspire to academic success. All students receive academic counseling to ensure that they are prepared for a broad range of academic options in high school.	Students are encouraged to aspire to academic success. Most students receive academic counseling to ensure that they are prepared for a broad range of academic options in high school.	Guidance to increase student awareness of future career and education options is available to most students.	No evidence is provided that students are given extra help or encouragement to aspire to academic success or to develop high school and career goals.
Teachers are involved in a variety of academic counseling activities and processes. A fully implemented teacher advisement program or other structured approach connects teachers and students.	Some teachers, in addition to counselors, actively support and counsel students to aspire to higher education and consider career goals.	A few teachers may be involved in counseling students about high school and career goals.	No evidence is provided that teachers are involved in advising students about high school and college and/or career goals.
All students, including those experiencing difficulty in achieving academic success, have personal learning plans that establish a meaningful course of study to be taken in preparation for success in high school. These plans are developed through collaboration with the student, school staff, and parents. There is evidence that the plans are reviewed and revised as needed.	Most students, including students with special needs, receive guidance in developing personal learning plans and revising them as needed.	Generally, only students who do well in academic course work are encouraged to prepare for college. Only special needs or at-risk students have personal learning plans.	There is no discussion of personal learning plans.
Programs include students from groups traditionally underrepresented in colleges and universities in courses that prepare them for academic success in high school. A variety of support strategies are provided to help them succeed.	Programs encourage students from groups traditionally underrepresented in colleges and universities to take courses that prepare them for academic success in high school. Support is provided to help them succeed.	Few programs and policies encourage students from groups traditionally underrepresented in colleges and universities to take courses that prepare them for academic success in high school.	No efforts are described to encourage students from groups traditionally underrepresented in college and universities to take courses that prepare them for academic success in high school.

8 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—SUPPORT FOR STUDENT LEARNING: Special Needs and At-Risk Students Identify the special needs and at-risk student population at this school. Describe the learning support services and personalized assistance provided to students with special needs. Describe the processes by which special needs and at-risk students are ensured access to and success in the core curriculum. Include evidence that learning support services are working. *Special needs and at-risk students include gifted and talented students; English language learners; students from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds; students receiving special education services; students not achieving their identified learning potential; students not meeting the school's performance standards; students in individualized programs; students with physical and mental health needs; students who exhibit behavior problems; students who do not attend school regularly; and/or students who are experiencing problems outside the school.*

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
The school takes responsibility for meeting the needs of all students. There is a coordinated process by which students with special needs are identified and help is provided. Administrators, teachers, counselors, families, other school staff, and community members act early and work together to determine successful interventions. Strategies such as use of a student study team (or student success team) and family-school compacts determine how the school and family will help the student succeed. Evidence demonstrates that those interventions have been successful.	The school uses its resources and those of families and the community to assist students who are experiencing difficulties. Responsibilities may not be clearly defined. The school staff works with families to identify successful interventions. Strategies such as use of a student study team (or student success team) and family-school compacts determine how the school and family will help the student succeed. There is some evidence that interventions have been successful.	The school takes some responsibility for meeting the needs of all students, and evidence shows that those efforts have resulted in some success. Individual teachers develop plans to help students succeed.	It is not clear whether anyone at the school takes responsibility for helping students with special needs to succeed in school.
The school provides a well-thought out and comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of special needs and at-risk students. These students are provided full access to the core curriculum. Additional learning support services are provided to this population of students to ensure that they are successful. Special education students are transitioned to and supported in mainstream classes, including full inclusion. English language learners are provided access to the core curriculum and effective instruction to acquire English language skills. Evidence shows that support services are having positive results.	Special needs students are provided access to the core curriculum, and additional learning support services are provided. Schools with large numbers of special needs students are clearly working to improve ways of meeting their needs. Information is provided on ways in which special education students are transitioned to mainstream classes. English language learners are provided access to the core curriculum and instruction to acquire English language skills.	There is general information that special education students are being mainstreamed. Discussion of other special needs groups may focus on remediation. Some special needs students may be provided access to the core curriculum and may meet the same standards as other students. It is not yet clear the way in which English language learners will be provided support in acquiring English language skills.	There is no evidence that special needs students are provided with the core curriculum or that they are able to meet the same standards as other students. Discussion focuses on remediation. The issue of English language acquisition is not addressed, although school demographics may indicate the presence of English language learners.
A variety of comprehensive learning support services are provided in the regular classroom or in special intervention programs with small-group or individual instructional activities. The support services are well coordinated to effectively use the resources of the school and community. The school provides extended learning activities beyond the typical school day.	A variety of comprehensive learning support services are provided in the regular classroom or in special intervention programs with small-group or individual instructional activities. Although the support services appear comprehensive, it may not be clear how or whether they are coordinated with one another at the school site.	Support services are provided by traditional categorical program pull-out strategies with little collaboration between resource staff and classroom teachers.	There is minimal evidence of student learning support services or appropriate interventions. There are no alternatives to full-group instruction.
Students who need health-related or other types of interventions are referred, with family approval, to support services that meet their needs. When possible, services are coordinated with the school site.	Students who need health-related or other types of interventions are referred, with family approval, to support service providers that meet their needs.	Families may be informed of indications that their students may need health-related or other interventions, but no assistance is provided.	There is no evidence that the school takes responsibility for making sure that families are informed about, and students are referred for, services where needed.

9 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—SUPPORT FOR STUDENT LEARNING: Safe and Healthy Schools and Coordinated Services   Describe strategies used to ensure a safe, clean, and secure learning environment that reflects the importance of education in our society. Describe programs and strategies to ensure that the school is free from drugs, alcohol, tobacco, crime, and violence and that healthy student behavior is promoted. Describe standards for student behavior and strategies for conflict resolution. Discuss how the school supports the coordination of health, social, and law enforcement services for students and families in the community.

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
There is a positive schoolwide focus on the safety, health, and well-being of students. The school has a comprehensive Safe School Plan. It also has research-based programs to promote students' healthy behaviors in the areas of nutrition and physical activity and to prevent drug, alcohol, and tobacco use; HIV/AIDS and STD; and teenage pregnancy. Evidence of success is demonstrated in an annual research-based assessment of school environment factors (e.g., California Safe School Assessment report, Healthy Kids Survey).	There is a positive schoolwide focus on the safety, health, and well-being of students. The school has a comprehensive Safe School Plan. It also has research-based programs to promote students' healthy behaviors in areas important for young adolescents and as required by law. Evidence of success in these areas is described.	Policies and procedures to ensure a secure environment and student well-being are described. Evidence is provided to show that students, families, and school staff believe the school is safe and secure. The school has programs to promote students' healthy behaviors.	Issues relating to student safety, health, and well-being are generally addressed.
Expectations for behavior at the school and in the community are well known and accepted by students. Courtesy, respect for others, and appreciation for diversity are modeled by school staff and reinforced by school policies. There are programs to help students learn to deal with conflict in a nonviolent manner, such as conflict resolution, mentoring, and peer mediation. Evidence of success or progress is provided.	Expectations for behavior at the school and in the community are disseminated and discussed on request. Efforts to promote respect for others, appreciation for diversity, and conflict resolution skills are visible in programs and policies. There are programs to help students learn to deal with conflict in a nonviolent manner, such as conflict resolution, mentoring, and peer mediation.	Expectations for behavior are not clear. Staff is working to establish a climate that promotes respect and appreciation for diversity. Formal, well-thought-out processes for building conflict resolution skills are not in place.	There is no discussion of expectations for student behavior or of efforts to integrate personal and social skills enhancement into the school program. Strategies that promote respect, appreciation for diversity, and peaceful resolution of conflict are not addressed.
The school has well-established partnerships with health, mental health, and social service providers as well as local law enforcement agencies to coordinate services to students and their families. The support system is well coordinated, accessible, and affordable. Evidence of success in meeting student needs is provided.	The school works closely with health, mental health, and social service providers and also collaborates with law enforcement agencies to provide services to students and families. There is evidence of some coordination of services by the school.	The school is developing a process for coordinating health, mental health, and social services for students and families. There is limited collaboration with law enforcement agencies.	The school may refer students and families to health, mental health, and social services providers where needed. There is no evidence of collaboration with law enforcement agencies.
The physical environment of the school reflects the importance of education in society. Resources, including those from the community, are provided to ensure that the buildings and grounds are clean and in good repair. School and classroom environments are stimulating and reflect pride in school and student work. A posted notice announces that the school is a tobacco-free and drug-free campus.	School repairs and maintenance are completed when possible, but the process may not be proactive or ongoing in nature. School and classroom environments are stimulating and reflect pride in school and student work.	The school community has explored resources for making needed repairs or enhancing the facilities or campus. The condition of the campus and classrooms does not meet expectations of cleanliness and school pride.	It does not appear that the school community has explored resources for making needed repairs or enhancing the facilities or campus. The campus and classrooms may show evidence of graffiti, disrepair, neglect, and/or lack of school pride.

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MIDDLE SCHOOLS—PARTNERSHIPS AMONG FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES: Family Involvement   Describe the strategies and activities used to ensure that families—which may include parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents, stepparents, guardians, or other caregivers—are collaborative partners in the education of their children and that teachers and families are encouraged to work together for the benefit of the children. Describe how the school communicates with families, including those who are not fluent in English if there are other language groups in the community. *Discussion may include, but is not limited to, strategies and activities that you use to support families in their roles as leaders and decision makers in school programs and policies; as teachers and supporters of their children's learning; as communicators between the home and the school about their children's progress; and as informed consumers of the educational and support services provided by the school and the broader community.*

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
The school has a comprehensive and systematic plan to effectively collaborate with families and community members to help students achieve schoolwide standards. They are viewed as critical members of the school leadership team and participate in determining a common vision for the school.	Many independent connections and activities involve families and the community, but there may not be an ongoing, systematic approach to use those resources. A planning effort is underway. The school makes an effort to know the community it serves.	The school tries to use the skills and talents of family members who offer to participate, but there is no overall plan for outreach to expand opportunities for family involvement at the school.	Families typically are involved in traditional activities, such as fund-raising and driving on field trips, rather than as a primary resource for students' academic success.
Families are offered a variety of options for contributing to the success of students and the school. Many family and community members volunteer at the school and participate as decision makers. They receive information and/or training to help them be active participants in decision making and supporting student learning. Teachers are trained to work effectively with families.	The principal and some faculty members meet periodically with families to discuss specific issues. Some family members regularly volunteer at the school and serve on committees that provide resources and support for both academic and nonacademic issues.	Families participate in social and extracurricular activities and booster clubs that support those activities. Family members occasionally serve in advisory roles to offer opinions on policy decisions.	Families participate in social and extracurricular activities and booster clubs that support those activities. Often the same families are the only ones actively involved. Families are not encouraged to play a role in academic or policy decisions.
A variety of strategies to promote two-way communication are described. They exceed traditional methods and may include a Web page, town hall meetings, forums, focus groups, etc. Families are informed about school issues as well as community services and resources. Families and their students are assisted during transitions from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school to ensure that those transitions are successful.	The school regularly communicates with families about its programs, policies, events, procedures, and deadlines through newsletters, bulletins, local media, etc. Some attempts are made to encourage two-way communication between the home and school about a child's needs or schoolwide student needs.	The school periodically informs families about programs, policies, events, procedures, and deadlines through traditional methods. Communication is primarily from the school to the home, although the school responds to inquiries.	Communication between the school and families appears to be limited and generally one way.
Strategies such as family-school compacts; programs to inform families about curriculum and assessment; on-site parent centers; and extended-day, enrichment, use of library/media resources, and tutorial programs help families support student learning. Families are offered parenting and adult education classes to support their children's development.	A variety of strategies are used to inform families about curriculum and assessment and programs to support student learning.	Families receive information about supporting student learning through parent-family/teacher conferences, report card comments, and newsletters.	There is no evidence that families are given assistance in supporting student learning.
The cultural diversity of students' families is valued throughout the school. Communication is routinely conducted with families in the appropriate home language(s).	The cultural diversity of students' families is acknowledged and respected. Communication is often conducted in the appropriate home language(s).	The cultural diversity of students' families is acknowledged and respected. Communication is sometimes conducted in the home language(s).	The cultural diversity of families may be acknowledged. The issue of home language communication is not addressed.

11 MIDDLE SCHOOLS—PARTNERSHIPS AMONG FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES: Community Connections   Describe the mechanisms that are in place to ensure that the school and community are engaged in partnerships that support student learning. Discuss relationships the school has developed with other schools and in the surrounding community. Describe the effect that these relationships have on students and the school. Discuss opportunities provided for students to learn about careers and to understand the connection between school and careers. Describe the school's efforts to engage the interest of and involve the nonparent community who do not have school-age children in the school. *The "community" may include, but is not limited to, other elementary, middle, and/or high schools, community agencies, businesses, industries, government agencies, community organizations, colleges and universities, and other entities appropriate to the area. Examples of the benefits of school-community partnerships may include, but are not limited to, strengthening students' sense of civic responsibility, demonstrating that their involvement can have a positive impact on their community, and increasing student knowledge through experiences beyond the classroom.*

4. Makes a Strong Case	3. Makes an Adequate Case	2. Makes a Limited Case	1. Makes a Minimal Case
The school has well-established collaborative partnerships with businesses, community entities, and other schools. Relationships are designed not only to provide monetary or material support to the school, but also to strengthen curriculum, expand student learning experiences, and provide opportunities for students to contribute to their community.	The school has some partnerships with businesses, community entities, and other schools. These partnerships provide monetary or material support to the school and some opportunities for students to contribute to their community.	The school may have a few partnerships and is developing others. These partnerships primarily provide monetary or material support to the school.	There is no discussion of partnerships.
Examples demonstrate the positive influence of school-community partnerships on the students.	The school-community partnerships have had some positive influence on student learning.	The school-community partnerships are too limited to have much influence on student learning.	It is not clear that the school is aware of the value of school-community partnerships to student learning.
The school collaborates with the community when developing curriculum and instruction by including the talents and skills of families and other community members, and through such strategies as projects, fieldwork, service-learning, etc.	The school works with community entities to expand the curriculum by including the talents and skills of families and other community members, and through such strategies as projects, fieldwork, service-learning, etc.	The school has relationships with local entities, but these relationships are not specifically focused on ways to include the talents and skills of families and other community members.	There is minimal evidence that the school is providing opportunities outside the classroom for students.
Students have frequent and various opportunities to observe different careers in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors and the variety of people working in those careers. The school makes an effort to develop student awareness of the connection between school and careers.	Students have some opportunities to observe different careers in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors and the variety of people working in those careers.	Students have limited opportunities to observe different careers and the variety of people working in those careers.	Students have no opportunities to observe different careers or the variety of people working in those careers.
The school has successful strategies to engage the interest of and involve its nonparent community and enjoys a high level of public confidence.	The school has some strategies to engage the interest of and involve its nonparent community.	The school is developing a plan to engage the interest of and involve the nonparent community.	The school is aware of the importance of involving the nonparent community, but there are no efforts to do so at this time.

Selected References

The publications data were supplied by the School Recognition Program Office. Questions about the materials should be addressed to the office at 916-657-3810. Publications by the California Department of Education may be obtained by calling the Sales Office, Publications Division, at 916-445-1260.

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